DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 466 PS 030 460

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TITLE Results of Kinder Camp: Stovall-Shaw Elementary School, Summer 2001.
INSTITUTION Franklin-Granville-Vance Partnership for Children, Henderson, NC.; Granville County Schools, Oxford, NC.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 5p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cognitive Development; Family Literacy; Kindergarten; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education; Pretests Posttests; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Reading Programs; *School Readiness; *Summer Programs
IDENTIFIERS North Carolina

ABSTRACT

North Carolina's Kinder Camp is a 4-week program designed to prepare children for entry into kindergarten. All participants must have completed Project Family Read. A North Carolina elementary school measured the programs effectiveness by using the Cognitive/Language Profile of the American Guidance Service Early Screening Profiles as a pre- and post-test for 14 children, ages 4-5. From the beginning of Family Read to the end of Kinder Camp, the average increase of cognitive/learning abilities was more than twice the amount that could be expected from age progression alone. Thus the programs appear to be effective in raising children's readiness for school. (KK)

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Results of Kinder Camp
Stovall-Shaw Elementary School
Summer 2001

A Project of
Granville County Schools
and
Franklin-Granville-Vance Partnership for Children

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September 2001

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Results of Kinder Camp
Stovall-Shaw Elementary School
Summer 2001

Kinder Camp provides a four-week program of early childhood instruction for incoming kindergarten students who were not in a regulated child care setting and who participated in Project Family Read. The program addresses the broad goal of Smart Start that "every child will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn."

During the summer of 2001, 16 children participated in Kinder Camp at Stovall-Shaw Elementary School in Granville County. The children were divided into two classes, with a teacher and teacher assistant in each class.

The Children

Of the 16 children participating, 9 were boys and 7 were girls. Although they would all enter kindergarten in the month after Kinder Camp was held, they ranged in age from 4 years, 9 months to 5 years, 8 months.

To be eligible for Kinder Camp, a child must have participated in Project Family Read, which is offered in both fall and spring. Two of the children had enrolled in that program in the spring of 2000 but had minimal participation. Seven had enrolled in Project Family Read in the fall of 2000, and seven had enrolled in the spring of 2001.

The Measure of School Readiness

The Cognitive/Language Profile of the American Guidance Service Early Screening Profiles was used to measure the children's understanding of verbal concepts, reasoning ability, and mastery of basic school skills. These are areas that are important for success in school. Validity studies have shown the test to have moderate to high relationships with tests administered in the primary grades and with teachers' ratings of social skills and development, indicating that it is a good predictor of later academic performance.

Evaluation Design

The children were pre-tested using the Cognitive/Language Profile soon after they entered Project Family Read. They were post-tested during the final week of Kinder Camp. The difference between pre-test scores and post-test scores shows the growth of the children in cognitive and language development during the pre- to post-test interval.

Because no control group (children not in Project Family Read and Kinder Camp but otherwise similar to these children) was available, it was not possible to compare children in the program with similar children not in the program—which would have

provided a more direct evaluation of the effects of Kinder Camp. For that reason, another strategy had to be employed. This was done by converting the children's scores on the Cognitive/Language Profile into Age Equivalents (AE) and comparing these scores with the actual (chronological) ages.

An Age Equivalent score is the average score obtained by children of a given age on the Cognitive/Language Profile. For example, an Age Equivalent score of 60 months is the average score made by 5-year-old (that is, 60-month-old) children on the test when it was standardized. If a child who is 60 months old (5 years old) makes an AE score of 72 months, that indicates that the child is functioning about the way the average 6-year-old child functions in terms of cognitive and language development. In other words, she is somewhat advanced for her age in that area of development.

Results

Of the 16 children participating in the program, both pre- and post-testing data was available for 14. The accompanying table shows results for the 14 children as Age Equivalent Scores in months. For each child, there are two columns. The light one on the left represents the pre-test while the darker one on the right represents the post-test. Differences in the height of the two columns show the gains for individual children. For example Child #1, (the left two columns) had an AE score of 52 months on pre-test and 76 months on post-test, indicating a gain of 24 months in Age Equivalents. Comparing the two columns for each child reveals that all but one of the children showed a gain on the Cognitive/Language Profile.

As indicated above, the children entered Project Family Read at different times. Therefore, they could be expected to show different amounts of gain, simply because of the different amounts of time between the pre-test and the post-test. In the table, children #1-6 entered Family Read in the fall of 2000 and were pre-tested in October of that year. Children #7-12 entered Family Read in the spring of 2001 and were pre-tested in February or March. Children #13 and 14 were tested in June 2000 but only attended a few sessions of Family Read. Their gains in the 14–month period between pre- and post-testing are shown in the table, but they are not included in the analysis described below because of their unique testing schedule and minimal participation in Project Family Read.

An analysis of the gains for the children entering Family Read in either the fall of 2000 or the spring of 2001 (children #1-12) shows an average gain of 16 months in Age Equivalent Scores. However, to assess the impact of Family Read and Kinder Camp, it is necessary to compare AE gains with the number of months between pre- and post-testing.

Children entering Project Family Read in Fall 2000. This group included children #1-6 on the graph. The time between pre- and post-testing for this group was approximately 9 months. Their average AE gain was 19 months, more than twice the actual time that elapsed. Since a gain of 9 months in AE might be anticipated for this group without a special program, it can be concluded that Project Family Read and

Kinder Camp had a combined effect of improving their cognitive and language status by 10 months.

Children entering Project Family Read in Spring 2001. This group included children #7-12. The time between pre- and post-testing for this group was approximately 4 ½ months. Their average AE gain was 11 months, again more than twice the elapsed time. Project Family Read and Kinder Camp can be assumed to have increased the children's cognitive and language functioning by 6 ½ months beyond what could be expected without the programs.

Collectively, the children had a post-test average Age Equivalent score of 6 years, 6 months as they prepared to enter kindergarten. Since the typical age of beginning kindergartners (including these) is about 5 years, 6 months, it appears that the children who participated in Project Family Read and Kinder Camp were well prepared for the academic requirements they will face in kindergarten.

Conclusion

Based on the data obtained from the Cognitive/Language Profile of the American Guidance Service Early Screening Profiles, it appears that Project Family Read and Kinder Camp were effective in substantially raising the readiness scores of participating children.